

The Australian National University
Institute of the Arts
Visual Arts Graduate Program



Canberra School of Art

GRADUATE DIPLOMA OF ART

ADAM MANN
July 1998

REPORT
PRESENTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE

Abstract

Milk: research into a documentary style of photography that produces subjective rather than objective statements. A study taking the form of an exhibition of photographs exhibited at the CSA Photospace Gallery from August 3 to 7, 1998, which comprises the outcome of the Studio Practice component, together with this Report which documents the nature of the course of study undertaken.

Thanks to my family, Paula,

Teacher of the Play, who was a Prince of Wales Research Fellow
and awarded me a grant that allowed me to do my Secondary Schedule 2
research and find time after 4.15 to do the rest of the post graduate
course

to the City of London

For her constant voice of love and support

Barbara Allen

For enough help above and beyond

Leanne Allen

For her unfatigued love and inspiration

Lee Anne & Eleanor Kay

For help, support, encouragement and an ever-expanding collection of single
mums

Jan Roland & Jennie Cargan

For taking me away with them in East St Kilda many times, and showing me
the best places and goodies within

and dogs, dogs everywhere

Acknowledgements

Martyn Jolly

Supervisor and friend, who says nice things about my work

Helen Ennis & Nigel London

For their encouragement and flexibility regarding deferred assessments

Professor Jeffrey Parker

Director of the Psychiatric wing at Prince of Wales Randwick, for acknowledging my sanity and releasing me from involuntary Schedule 2 confinement two days prior to the commencement of the postgraduate course

Katherine Mann

For her countless years of love and support

Deanna Mann

For so much help above and beyond

Tabitha Mann

For her unconditional love and inspiration

Lee Eeles & Eleanor Kay

For help, support, encouragement and an awe-inspiring collection of single malts

Ian Pollard & Janelle Carrigan

For letting me stay with them in East St Kilda many times, and showing me the best places and goodies within

and dogs, dogs everywhere.

Contents of the Program

Abstract	2
Acknowledgments	3
Contents	4
Objectives of the Program	5
Introductory Address	
Work in Progress Address	
Addenda	
Opening address to <i>Record</i> show	(1 page)
Press release for <i>Record</i> show	(1 page)
Invitation to <i>Record</i> show	(1 page)
Post exhibition proposal	(1 page)
Application for Graduate Diploma (by Studio Practice)	(3 pages)
<i>Black Dogs and Stupor</i> invitation	(1 page)
Press release for <i>Black Dogs and Stupor</i> show	(1 page)

Objectives of the Program

My goal for this postgraduate course was to create a body of photographs that was a logical progression from the images featured in the *Black Dogs* exhibition. The images in that show dealt primarily with themes of isolation and dislocation resulting from a mental illness I have had for some time. The current series, titled *Milk* (for reasons examined later), is the last in a run of four separate yet thematically linked exhibited bodies of work.

Each of these bodies deals in some way with a particular "Way of Seeing" emanating from a depressed mental condition. The first, *Untitled 93*, was a selection of nine heavily cropped photographs of Kings Cross at night, where my eye was caught by the speeding cars, the feet of passers-by and the stationary grit of the pavement.

The next series, *Prozac for Prometheus*, comprised of ten larger images, half taken again in Kings Cross and half taken in the interior of an Irish Pub. This second body still displayed an essentially negative outlook and it wasn't until the *Black Dogs* show that some less depressing imagery crept in.

In the *Black Dogs* show, issues like juxtaposition and image placement began to increase in importance as well as more varying subject choices. I know that in any further work these themes will have to be given significantly more attention.

So I began shooting for a fourth series, one that would allow a more tender and humane interpretation of my surroundings to be illuminated. It would also be the largest body of work I had undertaken so far. At around 24 images I would have more freedom to explore the issues that have been inspiring and challenging me, concepts such as human frailty, the needs we have for simple comforts, the desire for closeness, and all the other factors that define us as humans.

One could spend a lifetime exploring a list of concepts such as this, but I have chosen instead to photograph on a more intuitive level. Rather than try to encapsulate the entire human experience I have simply pointed a camera at some of the poignant details I have witnessed, thus creating an odd collection of images that somehow say something, hopefully to more people than myself.

Milk, the title of this show, speaks also of the ambiguity surrounding the work. The word milk is both a noun and a verb. Milk, the white liquid food of young mammals, and milk, the act of squeezing out worth, perhaps surreptitiously.

Milk at once pure, white and nourishing, also devious, greedy and dishonest. Is this what it is to be human? Don't ask me, I only work here.

The way in which I proceeded to work was (typically for me) completely spasmodic, or spastic to be more truthful. I would have times when, returning

from an interstate shoot, would process five rolls of 36 at once in one of those giant tanks. Then I would spend three days in the darkroom, emerging rarely looking like some spot-lit rabbit, receiving simultaneously curious looks at my dishevelled appearance and retina-burn. Then months would go by where it seemed I could achieve nothing.

There are many reasons for this inconsistency, the first being my subject matter and the way I find it. Some artists can simply walk into their studio and work — chisel off some more marble, bisque some more pots or arrange and shoot another still-life. But for me it is not quite so convenient. The subjects in my images have to present themselves to me. I cannot simply say that on Thursday I will shoot three rolls because, if I did, they would be three rolls of the dog (no offence meant Hudson old boy). I do, however, venture out to places where these subjects are likely to appear, hence the many journeys to Sydney, Melbourne and the pub.

But this is where the second problem occurs. During the last trip to Melbourne, my depression was so bad that I found it extremely hard to work. Anticipating much subject matter I had brought five rolls of film for the trip, but as it turned out it took me over three months to use them.

The way depression affected my work was twofold. While the negative emotions led to a certain type of subject matter and inspiration to look more closely at all things dingy, it also almost destroyed my working motivation on a day-to-day level. Thus at times my work was at a complete and undesired standstill.

Another problem that I noticed was that as I moved towards the end of the series, say a goal of 24 framed shots and having around 18, it became very difficult to “fill in the gaps”, the opposite problem to the end of a jigsaw puzzle, I imagine. I became more choosy and precious about what I needed, which of course is a stupid way of working. I should instead have forgotten about a “series” and just kept taking photographs. This, however, is a lot easier to say than to do. To actually work in this manner, a real cognitive change would be necessary.

The next part of this report was in fact written around 14 months earlier, at a time when my mental illness was very pronounced and affecting both my work and my reflections on it. It is included here for the sake of accurately representing my motives.

My feelings toward the series have now significantly changed and so too have some of the subject choices.

For instance, when I see the work now I do not have the same feeling of loss that I speak of here. While viewing the series now I believe the initial sense of loss is too shallow a reading, when I look deeper now I am given a sense of both joys and sad wonder.

I am writing this between Wagga and Albury on another train to Melbourne.

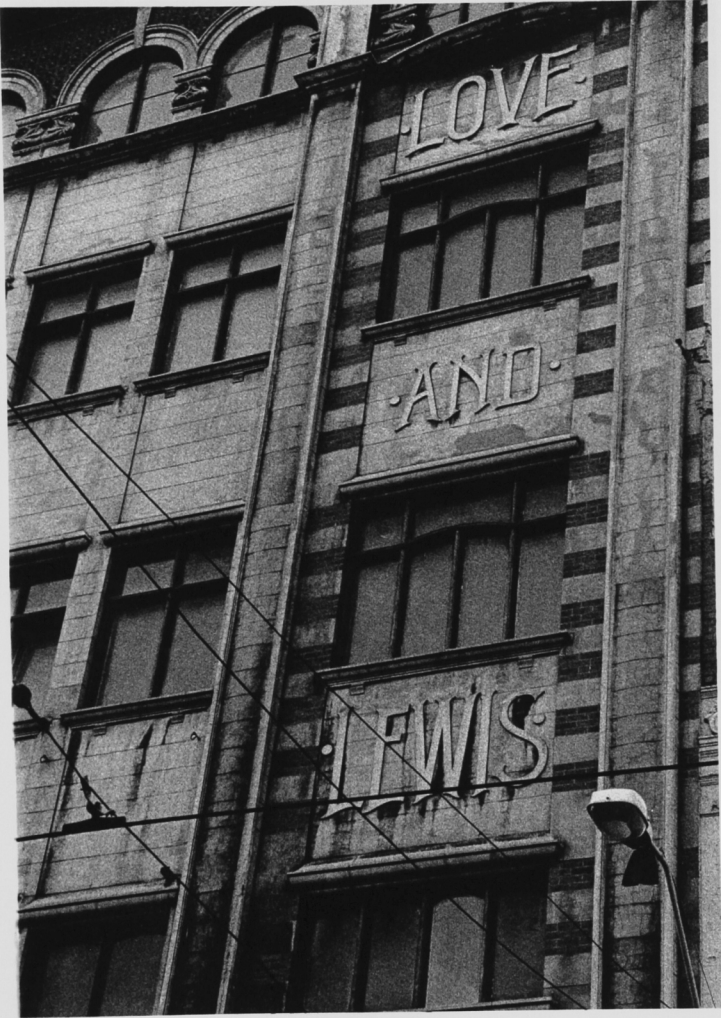
I have written nothing about my work for over a year and I feel it is now time to start. So far I have collected a number of images taken in the urban spaces of three cities. These pictures have been selected on the premise that they convey a similar feeling, that is one of loss — either for people, place or anything else that strikes me as important. Nostalgia raises its ugly head at times in this series but I have allowed it to slip through as it is in a way the ultimate expression of this same loss. It also suggests that one has passed through a time, be it good or bad, and come out the other end with the ability to dreamily reminisce (or in fact to remember at all). This to me suggests some sort of deranged hope.

There are too many images in the series to talk about each one individually. Instead I will select some key works and talk about their importance to me.

Love and Lewis. A simple picture of an old building facade in Melbourne taken at an angle from street level. A street light and some tram lines add simple ornamentation but the picture would be nothing without a company name appearing on the facade, "Love and Lewis".

Boots. An image I made on the Art School bus on the way home from a large scale gallery crawl in Sydney. Sitting in front of me were two second year girls crashed out and sprawled over two seats, their boots touching in the middle. It struck me as beautiful so I photographed it. There is something close and tender about the image, but also something quite sad.

Bed shopping. The first picture made after commencing the postgraduate course. This was taken at an opp. shop in Canberra when my ex-partner (pictured) and I went bed shopping for her four year old daughter. I like the formal arrangement of this picture with the patterns of the mattresses and the









hard chrome bed head. I like it also because it captures some of the sadness involved in having to buy your child's bed from the Salvation Army.

Heather. The most beautiful mannequin in the world. I found her on Chapel Street Prahran, and she had such a caring look in her eyes that I had to photograph her. Mannequins have been appearing rather frequently in my work lately. I photographed them intuitively rather than logically for obvious reasons — I just hoped that they would fit in somehow and somewhere.

As it turns out, I have found a use for them.

They are guardian angels.

They are religious icons of perfection.

They are the saints and martyrs in the Cathedral of Retro Retail and they punctuate a wall of real people with real feelings, somehow putting everything into perspective.

Just passing that flat flooded bit with the dead trees in it and there's quite a magnificent sunset. If I were a landscape photographer I'd be pulling the emergency brake about now. . .

During the time spent researching the work of other relevant artists I read about the Photo League in New York and other groups of photographers coming together with a commonality of subject matter or artistic goals. This inspired me to look around my own neck of the woods to see if anyone else was using documentary style photography and to make subjective and personal statements.

As it turned out there were quite a few. I approached them to see what motivated them and if they were interested in showing together — they were, and so with co-curator Aneta Bozic onside we began to create an exhibition.

"Record", contemporary documentary photography ran for a week at Photospace Gallery (12 May to 17 May) — it contained the work of students, graduates and lecturers (for opening address and invitation see Addenda). It appeared to me to be both a success and a failure, in that while failing to bring people together in working practice, it succeeded in showing the massive diversity in style, content and intent that has been present within the genre of contemporary documentary photography.

Introductory Address

Hello, I'm Adam Mann and I'm undertaking a studio-based postgraduate diploma in Photomedia after a two year break following completion of my degree in mid-1994.

For the last four years I have been making what could be loosely described as Documentary Photographs, and in this time four distinct bodies of work have emerged.

This first series was all taken on one stretch of Darlinghurst Road, and it was for me the first true expression of a way of seeing and interpreting my surroundings.

This way of seeing has gradually changed, but at the time it was a downward stare at the pavement, the gutters, and the feet of passers-by.

I returned again and again to the same spot on the same bridge, every time making sure to avoid the Coca Cola sign from getting in the frame.

I was interested in the movement of people and cars, as well as the stationary grit of the pavement and street. I believed I could only get these images in Sydney so I travelled there as often as I could.

Then the Phoenix opened. I took my camera there and was amazed to discover that I could get the imagery I wanted in, of all places, Canberra.

My Graduating Work, titled *Prozac for Prometheus*, comprised ten 20" by 24" photographs taken half from the Cross and half from the pub.

After graduating I continued to take photographs with the goal of creating a new body of work. I did this over several months and held an exhibition at Contemporary Artspace in Manuka. The show was titled *Black Dogs and Stupor*.

The main body of work from this show was still concerned with a perhaps negative way of seeing things but it seemed more contemplative and relaxed than the last works, and attempted to deal with the more bizarre and quirky aspects of my environment.

The exhibition also contained the pub end of my graduating work; a triptych of photographs titled *Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney*, twenty two ceramic wall pieces titled *Dirty*, two three-panel paintings, and an installation called *Moclobomide Man*.

The paintings I have been doing recently are expressions of identity and indeed a strange form of personal documentation in that they describe a flag-like manifesto of mind as well as give insight into the emotional self by the use of a painting style almost synonymous with joyous self-destruction.

Documentary photography and abstract expressionist painting may at first appear to be mutually exclusive activities, one a precise recording of time and place, the other a mad flailing of paint across any available surface. But I find that one gives release from the other and that they together form a description and expression of self more whole than either one could alone.

And now we come to the latest series of images that I have been forming since the beginning of this semester.

I believe that this new work is an obtuse form of self portraiture; I am not in the pictures and yet I think these images convey an understanding of my emotional composition and identity.

These new images offer a more humane, even tender, reading of my surroundings.

I believe that my work has changed significantly over the last four years. These changes are primarily subject related — almost all the new images are taken during daylight hours, and the subject matter itself has become softer, the harsh images of street scapes have been replaced with an introspective journey.

Gesture and expression have become the tools to convey a feeling that I have struggled to represent using other subjects.

Work in Progress Address

It struck me as odd that, while preparing this seminar, I found myself ransacking my files in a desperate attempt to find something worth regurgitating for you here this afternoon.

Why was I doing this? Was there nothing more to say about my work? Could I not string a few more new paragraphs together?

I probably could have, but I didn't. Neither did I exhume stanzas of rhetoric from presentations past, give them a light dust and recite them here today, so I could hide behind words when it's pictures that we came to see.

So rather than reading from notes for 20 minutes, I have chosen just to show you the pictures, tell you why I have included them in the series, and most importantly, hear what other people have to say about the images.

Once the public and government were forced to stare into the faces of those suffering, they realized that these images must be dealt with swiftly, and legislation and new policies were put in place. Photography had made an impact on policy and public awareness.

Since then the creativity of photo-documentation has been challenged on many levels and for many reasons (far too many to mention here). This has left the practitioners of this genre in a bit of a quandary—where to go, what pictures to take and what to say about them afterwards.

What many have done is what you now see — personal, intimate and subjective images.

To me, this evolution illustrates the immense diversity of photographic vision and techniques that have given contemporary documentary photography its new identity.

I would like to thank the artists for their enthusiasm, Marilyn Kelly and Dave Smith for their assistance, and my assistant Anita Hanks for her skill and dedication. Thank you.

Opening address to Record show

This is an exhibition of Documentary Photographs that brings together the work of nine contemporary artists that have one thing in common, that is their desire to record photographically that which has specific and personal meaning.

Both the subject matter and techniques used by each artist vary greatly, suggesting the complex way in which we interpret our surroundings.

Documentary photography itself is a relatively new form of expression, the phrase not being coined until the 1930s, a time of economic depression that provided the photographer with many opportunities to make damning statements concerning issues like starving farmers, forced child labour and the squalor of overcrowded urban slums.

Once the public and government were forced to stare into the faces of those suffering, they realised that these issues must be dealt with swiftly, and legislation and new schemes were put in place. Photography had made an impact on policy and public awareness.

Since then the credibility of photo-documentation has been challenged on many levels and for many reasons (far too many to mention here). This has left the practitioners of this genre in a bit of a quandary — where to go, what pictures to take and what to say about them afterwards.

What many have done is what you now see — personal, intimate and subjective images.

To me, this exhibition celebrates the immense diversity of style, content and technique that has given contemporary documentary photography its new identity.

I would like to thank the artists for their enthusiasm, Martyn Jolly and Gina Smith for their assistance, and my co-curator Aneta Bozic for her skill and determination. Thank you.

*For more information please contact:
Aneta Bozic on 29577882 or
Aneta Bozic on 2394097*

-----PRESS RELEASE-----

RECORD

CONTEMPORARY DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY

Venue	PHOTOSPACE GALLERY CANBERRA SCHOOL OF ART
Opening	6pm Wednesday 14th May
Dates	12 - 17 May
Times	9 am - 5 pm

Record is an exhibition by a number of artists, graduates, Masters students and lecturers who use the documentary genre to express a more subjective view of the world.

In this time of uncertainty with regards to the funding for the visual arts and their place and value within the community, *Record* demonstrates the exceptional quality, skill and vision that is present within the ACT region.

These images confront the viewer with an immediate desire to understand their message – contained, concealed or illuminated within the frame.

Whilst the work chosen for *Record* is diverse in its subject matter, approach and presentation, it all focuses on documentary photography as subjective rather than objective representation.

We thank you in advance for your interest and support and look forward to seeing you at the opening.

If you have any inquiries please do not hesitate to contact either
Adam Mann on 2957982 or
Aneta Bozic on 2394097

R
E
C
O
R
D

CONTEMPORARY
DOCUMENTARY
PHOTOGRAPHY

Curated by
adam mann
aneta bozic

the desire
remains
to record the
world
around us...

Opening - 6pm Wednesday
14th May
PHOTOSPACE
12th May - 17th May
CANBERRA
SCHOOL OF ART

the
a
r
t
i
s
t
s

michael barac
denise ferris
catina filardo

zvoni hodak
megan jones
sam lau

cathy laudenbach
bethanie nichols
silvia velez

Post Exhibition Proposal

(To be sighted with previous application/proposal for post-graduate diploma study)
by Adam Mann

In addition to the concepts examined in my original proposal (attached) I wish to explore some ideas that have emerged as a result of my exhibition at CCAS. Firstly, I wish to examine the crossovers and links between implied narrative and documentary that first may appear conflicting or even mutually exclusive. However, I see these anomalies as exciting in that they provide the kind of ambiguity that I frequently see occurring in real life situations. Secondly, I intend to develop further the connections that occur when my images are juxtaposed. In the series *Black Dogs* certain images worked in unison to add a new dimension to the body of work. They did so by either creating formal or conceptual links that have the potential to be developed much further.

In the next phase of my work I intend to make some stylistic and conceptual changes that reflect perhaps a more positive outlook. This may be achieved by steering clear of some of the more obvious subject choices focussing instead on the quizzical and bizarre features of our environment rather than the essentially negative.

Another area I wish to examine is the way I cognize and interpret subject matter. That is, I believe, directly related to my own emotional composition. I intend to make a thorough exploration of this way of seeing and attempt to strengthen build on it. Also, I am interested in experimenting with other photographic techniques that I have ignored so far. For instance most of the recent documentary work I have viewed has been in colour. I have had to re-think my position on this subject as I wish to diversify my approach and widen my scope.

In conclusion I am looking forward to a year of stimulating challenge, artistic progress, and a greater understanding of my chosen field.

Application for Graduate Diploma (by Studio Practice)

1.A. Overall objectives of the Proposal

I propose to create a large photographic exhibition that represents a year spent developing ideas, experimenting with subjects and materials, and forming a firm conceptual base for a body of work that has been in progress since 1993.

1.B. Concepts to be Explored

The work in question deals primarily with emotional responses to situations I find myself in where I am given time to contemplate my surroundings. This occurs most frequently in pubs, trains, trams, city streets or wherever people awkwardly congregate before moving on. I often find the places that people leave to be of greater interest than the people themselves - an empty seat can be full of meaning. The concepts I wish to represent in this work are: alienation, dislocation, dysfunctionism, and the marginalisation that occurs with drug use, mental illness and alcoholism. Last of all, I would like to explore the concept of humanism, which encompasses far more than an understanding and documentation of the human condition.

1.C. Necessary Resources

Technical

The photomedia workshop has more than sufficient facilities for the work I plan to carry out. My working requirements are fairly simple in that I use only black and white, and the extended hours of access made available to post graduate students will particularly suit my working practices.

Human

I intend to fully utilise the human resources the workshop environment provides, including lecturers, feedback from other students, advice from supervisors, guest lecturers, and weekly post graduate meetings.

2. Recent History

Since graduating in mid-1994, I have continued working as an artist with the goal of mounting a solo exhibition. Late last year I was granted a show at Canberra Contemporary Artspace, to open on 22 March 1996. This show will contain a selection of new material as well as my graduating work, and I hope it will mark the transition from art student to practicing artist.

3. Broader Social Context

As we enter the last few years of this century we are compelled to examine the ways in which society is changing, and the speed with which these changes are taking place. In doing so we must recognise the impact of the issues I am attempting to raise in this work.

Mental illness in particular is an issue that has been brought recently into the sphere of public awareness through changes in government policy, community service announcements and public debate.

However, I intend to discuss these issues in a far less heavy-handed manner, ignoring political correctness to a degree, and opting for a less didactic, more humane approach stemming mainly from personal experience.

4. Timeframe

In the first semester I wish to collect and consolidate all the relevant images I have been making until now, while at the same time creating more images which will be part of the finished body of work.

In the second semester I will, after careful consideration, make choices as to the size, format and arrangement of the works in the installation and proceed to execute the final images.

Throughout both semesters, I intend to set monthly goals to ensure a continuous and consistent working practice.

5. Influences

Photographers	Painters	Writers/Poets
Bill Henson Robert Frank Joel Peter Witkins Robyn Stacey	Jackson Pollock Tony Tuckson Robert Motherwell Franz Mark	William S. Burroughs George Orwell Andrew McGahan Tom Waits

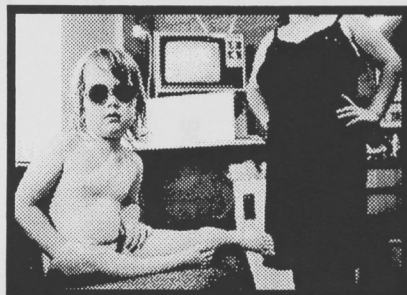
BLACK DOGS AND STUPOR

PHOTOGRAPHS, PAINTINGS AND CERAMICS

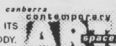
BY ADAM MANN

23 - 31 MARCH 1996
OPENING 6PM
FRIDAY 22 MARCH

19 FURNEAUX STREET, MANUKA
OPEN EVERY DAY 11AM — 5PM



THE CANBERRA CONTEMPORARY ARTSPACE ACKNOWLEDGES THE SUPPORT OF THE ACT GOVERNMENT THROUGH ITS CULTURAL COUNCIL, AND THE AUSTRALIA COUNCIL THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S ARTS FUNDING AND ADVISORY BODY.



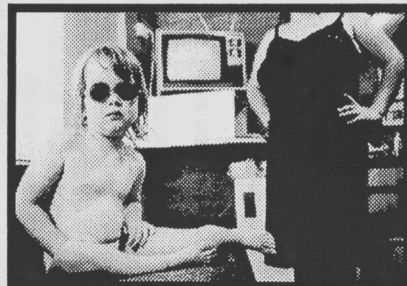
BLACK DOGS AND STUPOR

PHOTOGRAPHS, PAINTINGS AND CERAMICS

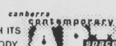
BY ADAM MANN

23 - 31 MARCH 1996
OPENING 6PM
FRIDAY 22 MARCH

19 FURNEAUX STREET, MANUKA
OPEN EVERY DAY 11AM — 5PM



THE CANBERRA CONTEMPORARY ARTSPACE ACKNOWLEDGES THE SUPPORT OF THE ACT GOVERNMENT THROUGH ITS CULTURAL COUNCIL, AND THE AUSTRALIA COUNCIL THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S ARTS FUNDING AND ADVISORY BODY.



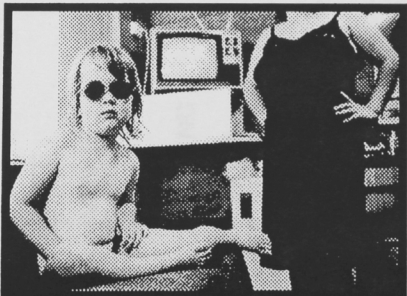
BLACK DOGS AND STUPOR

PHOTOGRAPHS, PAINTINGS AND CERAMICS

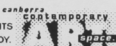
BY ADAM MANN

23 - 31 MARCH 1996
OPENING 6PM
FRIDAY 22 MARCH

19 FURNEAUX STREET, MANUKA
OPEN EVERY DAY 11AM — 5PM



THE CANBERRA CONTEMPORARY ARTSPACE ACKNOWLEDGES THE SUPPORT OF THE ACT GOVERNMENT THROUGH ITS CULTURAL COUNCIL, AND THE AUSTRALIA COUNCIL THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S ARTS FUNDING AND ADVISORY BODY.



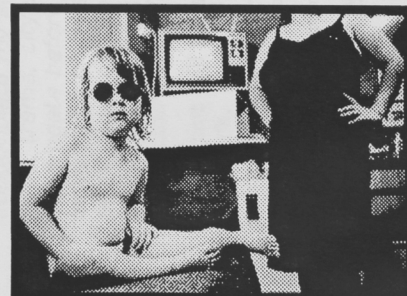
BLACK DOGS AND STUPOR

PHOTOGRAPHS, PAINTINGS AND CERAMICS

BY ADAM MANN

23 - 31 MARCH 1996
OPENING 6PM
FRIDAY 22 MARCH

19 FURNEAUX STREET, MANUKA
OPEN EVERY DAY 11AM — 5PM



THE CANBERRA CONTEMPORARY ARTSPACE ACKNOWLEDGES THE SUPPORT OF THE ACT GOVERNMENT THROUGH ITS CULTURAL COUNCIL, AND THE AUSTRALIA COUNCIL THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S ARTS FUNDING AND ADVISORY BODY.



MEDIA RELEASE

BLACK DOGS AND STUPOR

ADAM MANN

DATE :	23 - 31 MARCH 1996
VENUE :	CANBERRA CONTEMPORARY ART SPACE 19 FURNEAUX STREET, MANUKA
OPENING :	6 PM FRIDAY 22 MARCH, 1996
HOURS :	EVERY DAY 11 AM TO 5 PM

BLACK DOGS AND STUPOR

ADAM MANN

Adam Mann is exhibiting a body of photographic images that he has been working on since the completion of his degree from the Canberra School of Art, Photomedia workshop.

The images of **Black Dogs and Stupor** are a logical extension of his graduating work '**Prozac for Prometheus**' in that they contain similar subject matter and that they are attempts to elicit the strong emotional response from the viewer. However there are major differences.

" Some images will be conceptual in nature, others will be more documentary based. Some will be serious and austere, others will be humorous observations. The work deals with emotional responses to situations I find myself in where I am given time to contemplate my surroundings. This occurs most frequently in pubs, trams, city streets or wherever people awkwardly congregate before moving on. I often find the places that people leave to be of greater interest than the people themselves - an empty seat can be full of meaning. The work attempts to deal with alienation, dislocation, dysfunctionality and the marginalisation that occurs with drug use, mental illness and alcoholism."

The artist will be available throughout the exhibition to discuss the work.

The Canberra Contemporary Art Space Gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council, its Arts funding and advisory body and the ACT Government through its Cultural Council.